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ABSTRACT

In this paper the author draws on his own experiences in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to describe how audiovisual aids can enrich the adult's language learning experience. The paper begins with a brief outline of the ESL program in the San Francisco Community College District. The reluctance of many ESL instructors to make full use of available audio visual equipment is attributed to several difficulties: (1) familiarity and training: (2) operating techniques: (3) accessibility: (4) maintenance and repair: (5) cost and budget procedure; and (6) the process for securing software. Various audiovisual aids are discussed from a technical and instructional point of view. These include: (1) overhead projectors: (2) video tape recorders: (3) video tape recorders with television monitors: (4) television: (5) movies: (6) filmstrips: (7) slides: (8) opaque projectors: (9) radios, tape recorders and phonographs: and (10) display boards, flashcards, puppets, and other assorted materials Teachers and administrators are urged to incorporate these instructional aids into their ESL programs. (APM)

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INSIGHTS INTO AN AUDIOVISUAL APPROACH

WITH ADULT ESL STUDENTS

DANIEL PECK

1981

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Introduction

> As work shifted out of the fields and the homes children had to be prepared for factory life. England discovered as Andrew Ure wrote in 1835, that it was "nearly impossible to convert persons past the age of puberty, whether drawn from rural or from handicraft occupations into useful factory hands." The result was mass education taught basic reading, writing and arithmetic, a bit of history and other subjects. This was the "overt curriculum." But beneath it lay the "covert curriculum." It consisted and still does in most industrial nations - of three courses; one in punctuality, one in obedience and in rote, repetitive work.
>
> (Toffler: The Third Wave)

Mass educations 'covert curriculum' has succeeded and part of the cost was paid by the student who was separated from the real world. This sociological and psychological isolation from people, the marketplace and the community puts a tremendous burden on the teaching profession especially the adult ESL instructor. Language learning, as we know it today, is ultimately inseparable from the real world. Unfortunately there isn't enough of todays 'real world community' in most traditional adult ESL classrooms.

Purpose

In this paper I will attempt to describe how audiovisual aids can assist in bringing the language learning experience back into the light of the real world. I will also suggest six reasons why this is not happening in many adult ESL programs; programs in which despondent supervisors and administrators complain about dusty, unused A.V. aids and equipment.

My adult ESL experiences are taken from San Francisco Community College District as instructor, supervisor, administrator and learner for the last 14 years. A wonderful one year total immersion language experience with sixteen wonderful Vietnamese students greatly influenced my career as an assistant professor of ESL at Sacramento State University.

Our adult classes in S.F. are part of the community college system and are funded mainly by state revenues and housed in churches, storefronts, commercial sites, public schools and college buildings. Our students pay no fees for their classes. We have an open entry-open exit registration procedure. We keep careful attendance records and our budget is based on positive daily attendance. Our ESL classes are among the largest in the district, averaging 30 to 40 students per class, especially at the beginning or entry levels.

Our students range in age from 18 to 83 years and over 90 percent of our 4,000 unduplicated enrollment at the Chinatown/North Beach Community College Center are Chinese. Over 50% are from Vietnam and Southeast Asia and are ethnic Chinese. Our beginning levels of instruction are usually taught by bilingual instructors.

Our students usually work either part time or full time, as seamstresses, busboys, waiters, custodians or clerks in Chinatown.

Student intent ranges from learning enough English to getting a better paying job, to qualifying for stipended vocational training program, or a two year college, becoming citizens and socialization.

Students average ten to twenty hours a week of ESL instruction for two to three years with a switch to evening classes after a year and a half. It is not uncommon for our students to progress 2 to 4 levels in a 2½ year period. Some of our older female students make little progress, but enjoy the social contact with their peers.

Our immigrants and refugees have changed drastically in the last two year period. We are now attracting immigrants from the more rural and isolated areas of China and Southeast Asia. Their need for formal education was not as great as those from the city. This phenomena has resulted in a pattern of first language illiteracy. Our beginning levels have had to change structure to accommodate our new students. Presently, we are beginning

to divide our entry levels students into three categories:

a. illiterate in first and second language

b. elderly with socialization and community resources as their main reason for attending

c. literate in their native tongues and motivated to learn English for further schooling or a better job.

Our students are placed in our classes by written examination and counselor interview. Normally over seventy five percent of intermediate and upper level students are recommended by the preceding instructor.

Our dropout rate has drastically been reduced due to our long waiting lists. Students fear that they will lose their seats for one to two years if they drop out.

A homogeneous class doesn't exist in any sense. The rage in student goals, backgrounds, language skills and learning patterns make maximum teacher resourcefulness a must in S.F.'s Chinatown. Our learners have little time for home preparation and review. Most speak only their first language at home and in their newly adopted community of San Francisco's Chinatown.

Textbooks do not help much for beginning students who have been out of school for 10 to 15 years. Our students want textbooks because of established learning habits and patterns. We have found most beginning texts inadequate for home review and lack the grammar and survival vocabulary essential in an English speaking community.

Many of our instructors use handouts to supplement the textbook, but still rely on the traditional methods of teaching. Many have not risked trying any new A.V. aids on a regular basis. James Heaton refers to traditional A.V. aids as the "Basic Five"; the teacher; the student; the chalkboard; the textbook and the classroom.

I would like to venture forth six possible reasons why the "Basic Five" continues to exist in so many Adult ESL programs. They are as follows:

Familiarity and training

Operating techniques

Accessibility

Maintanence and repair

Software

Cost and budget procedure.

We assume that because we are professionals and some of our adult ESL instructors have received a graduate degree in ESL or an allied discipline that audiovisual familiarization and training was covered at the university. It is also assumed that our veteran and seasoned instructors know all about the equipment because "they have been around". We as administrators and supervisors are clearly at fault if we make any of the above assumptions and our expensive A.V. equipment will surely die a lonely death.

Media workshops for day and evening ESL instructors, led by qualified resource instructors, at least twice a semester, is a necessary first step. It is at these workshops that our faculty will learn about equipment operation and perfect techniques that apply to their language instruction. This familiarization will also cut down the 'fear of the mechanical' highly prevalent amongst adults and adult ESL instructors. The workshops can also be videotaped to provide a medium for training new staff and also provide an instant review for present faculty.

I often hear from instructors about the hassle it is to get the equipment to their classrooms, "it's so inaccessible", "we have to pick it up" or "I have to order two weeks in advance". We must try to make our equipment more accessible, to evening faculty as well as our day faculty. Our A.V. lists of available equipment and software must be constantly updated and a procedure for obtaining equipment and software must be simplified.

Regular maintenance must be a part of every ESL program budget. If regular maintenance is a luxury that your program cannot afford then

simple less mechanical equipment should be purchased. A good example is the VTR system.

It is estimated that regular A.V. workshops can cut the need for repair and replacement by 50%.

The process for securing software - the audio or videotape, filmstrip, film, record, transparencies, graphics must be considered before purchase. It is only through the inclusion of faculty in the selection process that software and equipment will become an essential part of every adult ESL classroom.

Finally, as cost becomes a larger obstacle in plans for purchase of new equipment it might be advisable to budget those items that are cheaper, easily maintained and often used by your faculty, e.g. the overhead projector. Repair of equipment should become a necessary budget item.

We are now ready to take a look at some of the available A.V. aids and suggestions on how to effectively use them with adult ESL students. In Chinatown our instructors are using ditto masters to duplicated dialogues, charts, and illustrations. With the help of a thermofax machine (costing between $600 and $900) an instructor can duplicate any page, as long as the print has some carbon content. If this is not the case a copy must first be made on an electronic copier (e.g. - Xerox). Ditto masters can also be typed, hand written and hand drawn. Seventy five copies is usually the maximum for good quality in ditto duplication.

The <u>overhead projector</u> is used by many of our intermediate and advanced level instructors, but only sparingly by our beginning level instructors. The OH transparency can be manipulated

while it is being projected and this medium readily lends itself to test correction feedback, dialogues, compostion and grammar exercises. Almost any illustration and printed material can be made into a transparency by the use of the thermofax method. Colored felt-tipped pens can also be used effectively for preparing teacher made transparencies.

Rolls of acetate can be attached to the OH and what you now have is a 'moving chalkboard' and a chalkboard with a memory. A medium visible enough for your elderly to see clearly. This rolled acetate is especially helpful when a substitute is unexpectedly needed for it provides a ready review. The OH projector also allows the instructor to face the class and monitor responses or even test. Acetate sheets can be cut up for word order changes or the addition, deletion, or substitution of words for grammar exercises. The possibilities for using this relatively inexpensive aid ($120-$250) in the adult ESL classroom are limitless. It is also very portable, easy to operate, easily maintained, can be stored in a closet and the software is no problem, especially when you use the thermofax process.

The video tape recorder is playing a much more prominent role in some adult ESL programs. Those programs that have purchased the new portable equipment which is fairly easy to operate, ~~and~~ use it for teacher training as well as student learning activities. The three watchwords in video are inservice, software and maintenance. All faculty should be able to comfortably use the camera and set up the recorder and microphone before they are asked to solo. The cost for repair of VTR systems is to be seriously considered before purchase.

There is a limited amount of language software available on videotape. Suzanne Griffin and BBC have just put together a fine ESL series entitled "Follow me to San Francisco" which is written for intermediate and advanced level students. It has a student text and teacher handbook.

The video tape recorder with a television (monitor) can be used to present a prerecorded videotape at the appropriate time in your class's language learning cycle - not just when its presented on television. If you are using 3/4 inch videotape, you can then put a bilingual voice track on any prerecorded program. We've successfully recorded guest lecturers talking on job fairs and income tax preparation. The videotape has a great advantage in that it can be erased and used many times over. The VTR can be used to evaluate by recording the class as a group or individually and then played back as a "before and after" check. The VTR is useful for self evaluation for students and teacher, role playing, and visual checks of language applications.

The television is usually accessible and easy to operate. The choice of programs, whether it be the educational channels, news, documentary, cultural or just a slice of life has a distinct psychological effect - a sense of peeking into a human experience. T.V. has language involvement that allows exposure to appropriateness in language and gesture. A quality of language that is difficult to find in most textbooks and chalkboards.

Movies are a good informational and visual source of Americana - real and emotional. The instructor should of course preview a film so the vocabulary and situations may be introduced and then reviewed after the showing.

Movies are accessible, fairly easy to operate and the software is usually offered through a school library.

Filmstrips are especially useful with audio tapes. Filmstrip projectors with audio are fairly easy to operate and easily stored for accessibility. The software, the filmstrip is not usually made for the english language lessons. Filmstrips made for math, science, history, vocational subjects may be used in class or small group activities. Filmstrips depicting other countries may be useful in cultural interchange and enlightenment. The great advantage is the easy stop and start that applies to the language lesson. Dialogues may be written by teacher and class.

The opaque projector is one of the easiest to operate. It enlarges most any illustration such as pictures, charts, maps, paragraphs and any student assignment. Test corrections, illustrations and small pictures are easily projected for all to see - especially those with less than perfect vision. The opaque projector is rarely used because it's large and heavy, making it an ideal candidate for storing in some inaccessible room to gather dust.

Slides are very popular with our instructors in Chinatown. Homemade slides from China, Hong Kong and vacation trips can be used to stimulate conversation, introduce vocabulary, practice pronunciation and improve writing skills. Slides allow us to interact with the real world in living color, visualizing real people we don't normally find in our class rooms. From this visual experience comes the motivation for practicing english in real world contexts. Students may bring their slides to share and may prepare a script to accompany their pictures.

Three other commonly used A.V. aids are the radio, phonograph and the tape recorder. They take teacher resourcefulness and are easily

stored.

All three are simple to operate with software usually available at most schools. More importantly they can all operate on batteries for those remote language learning classrooms and field trips.

Some other visual aids that are used successfully in the language lesson include boards: magnetic, peg and flannel with word and picture pockets for manipulation. Flashcards are also commercially available and are ideal for reviewing vocabulary, pronounciation and symbols.

Essential ESL classroom realia include paper thermometers, money, calendars, clocks, maps, bus routes, mirrors, tableware, hand puppets and a large picture file.

If I had to recommend only three technical aids for an adult ESL program with a limited budget they would be an electronic ditto machine, a thermofax and an overhead projector. They are all simple to use and highly practical.

Audiovisual aids usually make a lesson more interesting and involve more students. They involve visual senses that are often omitted in a lecture approach. Learning theorists contend that there is a better chance of language retention when learning is applicable and a greater number of senses are used in the language process.

Through the use of well selected A.V. aids, the ESL instructor can break down some of the walls separating our students from the real world community. This is especially important for the adult student who is planning on being a permanent part of a newly adopted community.

Administrators and instructors must continue developing ways to make better use of the A.V. aids through in-service training, greater accessibility of equipment, special budget planning sessions involving faculty in the selection of A.V. software and new equipment.

Hopefully, then the "Basic Five" will become the "Uncommon Five"

> The responsible and well trained ESL teacher must be aware of all the teaching aids the school might have at hand. He or she must then select and use those aids that best serve the objectives of the lesson, the needs of the students, and his or her own teaching style. (Marianne Celce-Murcia)

For a quick glimpse into the future of language and literacy, Toffler in his <u>The Third Wave</u> states:

> In altering the info-sphere so profoundly, we are destined to transform our own minds as well as the way we think about our problems, the way we synthesize information, the way we anticipate the consequences of our own actions. We are likely to change the role of literacy in our lives. We may even alter our own brain chemistry.
>
> Hald's comment about the ability of computers and chip-studded appliances to converse with us is not as bluesky as it might seem. "Voice data entry" terminals in existence today are already capable of recognizing and responding to a vocabulary of more than one thousand words, and many companies from IBM or Nippon electronics to midgets like Heuristics Inc. or Centigram Corp are racing to expand the vocabulary, simplify the technology and radically slash the costs. Forecasts for when computers will feel at home with natural language range from 20 years to a mere 5 years and the implication of this develpment on both the economy and the culture - could be tremendous.
>
> Today millions of people are excluded from the job market because they are functionally illiterate. Even the simplest jobs demand people who are capable of reading forms, on-off buttons, pay checks, job instructions and the like.
>
> Yet literacy, of course, is more than a job skill. It is the doorway to a fantastic universe of imagination and pleasure. Yet in an intelligent environment, when machines, appliances and even walls are programmed to speak, literacy could turn out to be less paychecked linked than it has been for the last 300 years. Airline reservations clerks, stockroom personnel, machine operators and repairmen may be able to function quite adequately on the job by listening rather than reading, as a voice from the machine tells them step by step, what to do next or how to replace a broken part.

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